

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SIG-01 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02
SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 ACDA-12 OMB-01
TRSE-00 /074 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/AFN:ALEGGIO/JKBISHOP:MAR
APPROVED BY NEA:NAVELIOTES
PM:JBURGESS
DOD/ISA:LHIL FBRANDT
EUR/CE:MR. LAUDERDALE
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EUR/NE:JSHUMATE
EUR/SOV:KBROWN
EUR/CAN:CCLEMENT
EUR/RPM:JFROEBE

-----124196 120652Z /15

R 120046Z JAN 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY MADRID
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COMSIXTHFLT
CINCUSNAVEUR
USCINCEUR
CNO
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 008286

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, TS

SUBJECT: SOVIET USE OF MENZEL-BOURGUIBA DOCKYARDS IN
TUNISIA

REFS: (A) STATE 295497; (B) TUNIS 9120

1. THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT HAS CONCLUDED AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION THAT ALLOWS REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF SOVIET NAVAL VESSELS AT THE MENZEL-BOURGUIBA DOCKYARD FACILITIES AT BIZERTE (FORMER FRENCH NAVAL BASE). SINCE EARLY JUNE, 1977, NINE SOVIET NAVAL SHIPS, REPORTEDLY INCLUDING ONE SUBMARINE, HAVE USED THE TUNISIAN FACILITIES. EMBASSY TUNIS HAS EXPRESSED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS U.S. CONCERN ABOUT THIS ACCESS TO SENIOR TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY AND PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA. STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS HAVE ALSO REITERATED TO THE TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR U.S. CONCERN AT THE ENHANCED OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY THE SOVIET MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON ENJOYS AS A RESULT OF TUNISIA'S DECISION TO ALLOW IT TO UNDERTAKE REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE AT MENZEL-BOURGUIBA.

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2. TUNISIAN OFFICIALS HAVE CITED AS JUSTIFICATION FOR

THEIR DECISION THE DISINTEREST OF THE U.S. SIXTH FLEET IN USING THE INSTALLATIONS AND TUNISIAN NEED FOR THE REVENUE EARNED BY MAINTAINING AND REPAIRING FOREIGN VESSELS.

3. A RECENT U.S. NAVAL REVIEW REPORTED THAT ANY SIXTH FLEET USE WOULD REMAIN MARGINAL IN TERMS OF USN REQUIREMENTS AND COMMERCIAL BENEFITS TO TUNISIA. THE DEPARTMENT HAS REBUFFED SUGGESTIONS WE OFFER LIMITED SIXTH FLEET BUSINESS IN THE BELIEF THE TUNISIANS WOULD CLAIM SIXTH FLEET ACCESS BALANCES THAT GIVEN THE SOVIET MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON. INSTEAD, WE CONTINUE TO PRESS THE TUNISIANS TO TERMINATE OR RESTRICT SOVIET USE OF THE MENZEL-BOURGUIBA DOCKYARDS.

4. ACTION ADDRESSEES HAVE BEEN SELECTED IN BELIEF HOST GOVERNMENTS SHARE USG CONCERN AT SOVIET NAVAL USE OF MENZEL-BOURGUIBA AND WITH HOPE THAT THEIR PARTICULARLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE LATTER SENSITIVE TO THEIR ATTITUDES ON THIS ISSUE. EMBASSIES ARE REQUESTED TO BRIEF HOST GOVERNMENTS ON

SOVIET USE OF MENZEL-BOURGUIBA, WITH WHICH WE BELIEVE THEY ALREADY ARE GENERALLY FAMILIAR THROUGH EXCHANGES OF INFORMATION WITHIN NATO CONTEXT. ADDRESSEES SHOULD INFORM HOST GOVERNMENTS THAT USG HAS EXPRESSED REPEATEDLY TO TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES ITS CONCERN THAT THEIR DECISION HAS CONSIDERABLY IMPROVED THE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY OF THE SOVIET MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON AND WILL IMPAIR TUNISIA'S IMAGE WITH U.S. PUBLIC AND CONGRES" ONCE IT BECOMES KNOWN. TUNISIAN REACTION HAS BEEN DISAPPOINTINGLY EVASIVE AND HAS INCLUDED REFERENCE TO FAILURE OF OTHER NATO POWERS TO EXPRESS CONCERN. ADDRESSEES SHOULD TELL HOST GOVERNMENTS USG WOULD WELCOME THEIR SUPPORT IN MAKING TUNISIANS AWARE OF SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH SOME OF ITS IMPORTANT WESTERN FRIENDS VIEW SOVIET USE OF MENZEL-BOURGUIBA.
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5. SEPTELS BEING REPEATED ACTION ADDRESSEES FOR YOUR FURTHER BACKGROUND.

6. FOR TUNIS: DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR IDENTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER WESTERN GOVERNMENTS WHOSE OPINIONS ON THIS ISSUE MIGHT PROMPT TUNISIANS TO REEXAMINE THEIR POSITION. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NAVAL SHIPS, MILITARY EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE008286
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ALEGGIO/JKBISHOP:MAR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780017-0832
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780169/aaaacgcz.tel
Line Count: 144
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1d37fce3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 295497, 78 TUNIS 9120
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3782684
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET USE OF MENZEL-BOURGUIBA DOCKYARDS IN TUNISIA
TAGS: PINR, TS
To: BONN LONDON MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1d37fce3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014